

KAPPA TALK



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY CHAPTER (#0151) OF PHI DELTA KAPPA INTERNATIONAL

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President's Message

Greetings and Salutations, Fellow Kappans, While the last year has been unlike any in our recent memory, Spring 2021 has sprung with the beauty of nature, including the return of the cicadas and the vaccines in the fight against the COVID-19 virus. With 'pensive thought', as educators we can reflect that we have witnessed the convergence of the many disciplines that brought about the collaboration to accelerate the development of the vaccines—science, business, communications, technology and the social sciences, to name a few. This would not have been possible without the community of passionate and committed teachers, educators, counselors, administrators and family around the world.



Cassandra Penn Lucas,
President

Our chapter continues to engage in enlightening learning opportunities. Via ZOOM, members joined the American University School of Education (SOE) BIG Ideas in Education series. On March 17th, the SOE held a panel presentation moderated by Dean Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, entitled "Anti-racism in K-12 Education". Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) American University (AU) Chapter #0151 supports Dr. Holcomb-McCoy in her contributions to advance the PDK tenets of Social Justice, Engagement, Excellence and Results.

At our March meeting, in recognition of Women's History Month, Dr. Valerie L. Thomas, a renowned National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) scientist and mathematician (retired) was our guest speaker. Her presentation included an overview of how science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) impacts our daily lives--climate change, crop production and water pollution--in ways that perhaps, we give little thought. Throughout her career at NASA, she served as a mentor to numerous students, from high school to post-graduate.

Among Dr. Thomas's many accomplishments is her development of the Minority University-Space Interdisciplinary Network (MU-SPIN) Program.

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Kappa Talk is published quarterly. If you would like to submit an article for the newsletter, e-mail your articles to mildredlmusgrove@comcast.net. Send in items to let us know what you are doing, articles on educational issues (fast facts), or any other item of interest.

To facilitate the process, all articles and photos must be submitted by **August 25, 2021** to be published in the June issue. Education sharpens one's curiosity about events. Members of the AU Chapter are curious about what fellow Kappans are doing. Let us know about your exciting events and careers. Our newsletter is an important communication tool for the American University Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa International. Share your knowledge.

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MU-SPIN is a major education and scientific networking initiative that transfers technology to minority institutions and promotes the use of the Internet for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic serving institutions, and Tribal Colleges. In retirement, Dr. Thomas is a substitute teacher in the Prince Georges County, Maryland Public School System and is the current president of the Metropolitan Washington, DC Chapter of Shades of Blue, a national education program that actively encourages, engages and provides ‘hands-on’ experiences for young students of color aspiring to become aviators.

At our April meeting, Thomas L. Jones, Immediate Past President, officiated the ‘virtual’ swearing in ceremony for our newly elected 2021-22 Officers—donning his robe, with the framed PDK International emblems in the background. Additionally, Dr. Keith E. Robinson, Vice President of Programs, shared that he will be taking a one-year sabbatical from the chapter, as he has been selected to co-author a chapter for a textbook on leadership at the University of Maryland. With reluctance and much sadness, Immediate Past President Jones states ‘...the membership fully understands that an individual of your caliber cannot remain in one setting... becoming fully recognized for your “superb expertise”, “dynamic creativity” and “renowned dedication” to the excellence of teaching and learning’. On behalf of the chapter, Mr. Jones expresses our appreciation to Dr. Robinson as the former Editor of our newsletter, *Kappa Talk*. The newsletter was a display of a product that promoted one’s critical thinking skills and served as an “Academic Clearing House” for educators to include counselors, administrators, and future teachers. Further, upon becoming the Vice President of Programs, Dr. Robinson continued to display his leadership skills by inviting academicians and researchers as guest speakers at our General Membership meetings. Chapter members appreciate the many contributions he has made in uplifting our chapter. We extend our best wishes and confidence for much success in his future endeavors.

Dr. Robinson announced that fellow Kappans Thomas and Helena Jones will represent our chapter in an interview with the “Teachers in the

Movement. . .An Oral History” research project, directed by Dr. Derrick P. Aldridge, (our guest speaker, February 2021). The Jones’s discussion will be a part of the history of more than 500 educator activists from 1950-1980. Thank you for your contributions toward increasing the visibility of PDK AU Chapter #0151.

Annually, in the month of May, our chapter recognizes individuals who have displayed exemplary service in support of education. This year, Ms. Kimberley Graves, Principal of Charles R. Drew Elementary School in Arlington, VA was the recipient of our Educator of the Year award. Fellow Kappan Wanda Means-Harris, Technology Representative, was awarded the Service Key, the highest and most prestigious honor PDK International bestows. Ms. Means-Harris has been our anchor throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and she continues to unselfishly share her expertise to ensure our chapter ZOOM meetings.

Despite the many challenges we have faced in the last year, each member continues in dedicated service to our chapter. A special “Thank You” to Dr. Mildred Musgrove and Joan A. T. Kelley Newsletter Editors, and all who contributed articles for our informative *Kappa Talk*.

The chapter will be in recess until this Fall. However, our committees will be at work to ensure a successful launch of new, bold initiatives for the upcoming year. As more of us are being vaccinated and COVID-19 restrictions are being lifted, join me in anticipation of our next face-to-face meeting, where we can share the long overdue hugs/handshakes/fist bumps we have missed.

**HAVE A GREAT
SUMMER
AND
STAY SAFE!**

**MS. KIMBERLEY GRAVES, PRINCIPAL
DR. CHARLES R. DREW ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL - AU CHAPTER EDUCATOR OF
THE YEAR**

Nominated by Dr. Keith E. Robinson



American University Chapter President Cassandra Penn Lucas presents Educator of the Year plaque to Kimberley Graves.



Kimberley Graves, principal of Drew Model School, chats with her students. (Photo by Evan Cantwell)

Notably, before Ms. Graves introduction to the AU Chapter membership, she had consulted with Dr. Keith E. Robinson, Vice President of Programs via his role as Director of Education Activities/Executive Director of Theta Rho Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. in Spring 2020, on the design, development, and implementation of a first time-ever Boys Club, titled: “LEADERSHIP NOW” initiative that was to be implemented jointly with Carlin Springs Elementary School in Arlington County in the fall, the school year 2020, pre-COVID-19.

On **Saturday, September 19, 2020**, she served as one of four handpicked program panelists at the AU Chapter #0151, Phi Delta Kappa International first general meeting, and presented for one and one-half hours **On Becoming Teacher and Principal of the Year!** Upon being awarded the **Educator of the Year**, Ms. Graves shared with the Chapter in her presentation how she decided to become an educator, her passion for teaching, and how important the field and profession of education are. She noted that teaching all children is her joy, but what she values most is teaching children who have the greatest need.

Ms. Graves has 23 years of experience as an educator and instructional leader. Ms. Graves holds a Bachelor of Arts in government from the College of William and Mary and a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from George Mason University. She also holds certification in K-12 supervision and administration and in social studies.

She transitioned to the northern Virginia area in 1999 to begin working at Minnie Howard/T.C. Williams High School as a social studies teacher and was later promoted to serve as a middle school assistant principal. In 2005, she was appointed to serve as the principal of Jefferson-Houston Elementary School. During her tenure, the school improved student achievement significantly and earned full accreditation.

She joined the Arlington County Public School System in 2012 serving as the principal of Hoffman-Boston Elementary School. Under her leadership, she brought high-quality instructional programs and practices to Hoffman-Boston, which led to the school to receive the Virginia Distinguished Award of Excellence for the first time in the school’s history.

Ms. Graves has a passion and dedication to work with underprivileged and underserved communities and is driven to make a difference in their lives by ensuring that they have a solid educational foundation. Her former superintendent, Dr. Patrick Murphy characterizes her as “a passionate, thoughtful and collaborative leader. She truly demonstrates the belief and leadership practices that all children can learn. She strongly believes in community and family partnerships that lead to increasing student engagement and meeting the needs of the whole child.”

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Ms. Graves was selected as the Arlington County 2018 Principal of the Year and most recently was reassigned to serve as the principal of Dr. Charles R. Drew Elementary School to work collaboratively to transform this school community. Throughout the course of her career, she has received several awards and recognitions included but not limited to being selected as the Top 10 Influential People in Alexandria City and Arlington Lodge No. 58 Community Appreciation Excellence Award. She has shared her expertise and experience by presenting at several local and national conferences including the National Association of Bilingual Educators, National School Board Association (NABE) and The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and most recently was participated in the Harvard for Women in Leadership Institute.

A SYNTHESIS OF KAPPAN ARTICLES (February and April 2021) ABOUT RESEARCH

By Dr. Katherine James

A major problem identified:

“For decades, educational research has been the subject of intense criticism from all sides (Kaestle, 1993) and “...such criticism has been exacerbated by a history of distrust between practitioners and researchers...with many educators feeling that they have been disrespected by researchers....” (Tuck & Yang, 2014; Vakil et al., 2016). Many of us have been unaware of the tension that has existed between these two professions, and it is not surprising that so often the thorough research which has been done has not found its way into classrooms or central offices.

Why does this oppositional situation exist?

“Practitioners and researchers live in different professional worlds, each with its own institutional language and norms, hierarchies

incentive systems, and approaches to solving problems” (Brown & Allen, 2021).

Historian Ellen Condiffe Lagemann states that “Education researchers...have always been overly preoccupied with boosting their own professional status... [and] have given too much priority to publishing in prestigious journals, speaking at conferences, establishing graduate programs, and otherwise trying to distinguish themselves as having special knowledge and expertise...[and] have shied away from...working hand-in-hand with local educators” (Lagemann, 1997).

Educators, too, bear some responsibility in not exploring the research that has been done and applying it appropriately to their own arenas, whether system-wide or in individual classrooms. It has been noted by the authors of such reports, writers, and others that many a research project has been important, well written, and usable; yet the report sits on shelves, gathering dust.

What can be done to resolve the situation and proceed to utilize empirical findings in the best interests of students and teachers?

Now that the problem has been defined, and a possible solution has been identified, how do we progress? What are the steps?

The articles suggest that one effective answer lies in developing Research-Practice Partnerships (RPPs) between educators and organizations that support educational undertakings and progress. “RPPs are designed to meet the specific needs identified by local practitioners, and early studies have shown that they positively influence both the production of research and its use” (Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2013; Farrell et al., 2018). The National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships is accessible through <https://nnerpp.rice.edu>. So, who will begin to bridge the gap?

One suggestion is that systems or even individual educators identify their main goal or goals, then access this link and find organizations that have particular interests in fostering those goals, followed by contacting them directly or through the RPP process. Once a match is made, the two organizations set up a series of meetings—this is

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of primary importance—to meet and discuss the goals. There must be a commitment on both sides to collaborate well, working together on a regular basis and maintain regular communication throughout the pursuit of the goals during the work in progress.

This practice can work on an even smaller scale through Action Research, which is defined as research done by teachers to address specific issues in their own classrooms or subject areas. While the teachers generally set up the plan for implementing their research, they may seek additional support from a smaller partnership for strengthened progress and outcomes. If the results show success, teachers can move on to larger issues and perhaps involve their entire school, and later the district and the entire system, in utilizing partnerships to both (1) bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners and (2) produce outcomes that will contribute to the efficacy of the educational progress of all students.

Vivian Tseng has recorded some suggestions for President Biden in her article “Toward a new agenda for education research.” They include:

-The Biden administration should rebuild the National Board of Education Sciences, aiming toward ensuring that the board’s membership reflects both scientific expertise but also the interests of teachers, education leaders, parents, and community stakeholders in education.

-The new administration should make it a priority to improve the funding and organizational health of the Institute of Education Sciences.

-Congress should renew the Education Sciences Reform Act (SRA), which aimed to improve the scientific rigor of education research.

Under Long-term rebuilding, Tseng suggests:

1. Bring practitioners and communities to the table when setting research priorities.
2. Increase access to research and evaluation findings through partnerships.
3. Build the infrastructure for evidence use.
4. Develop an evidence base that is fit for its purpose.

She concludes by saying, “We can build a better education system, but to do so, we’ll need to reinvest in and rethink education research, making it more relevant, more useful, and more democratic” (2020).

Epilogue: In the May 2021 issue of *The Kappan*, Jennifer Altavilla contributes an article entitled “The right time for research-practice partnerships,” in which she shares how during the pandemic, when school doors were closed, her school district actually got stronger. The partnership members at Stanford University found new ways to expand the research plan, such as digitizing important documents, which otherwise could not have been accessed during school closures. “...researchers agreed to support practitioners to achieve their short-term goals, while practitioners opened themselves up to... ‘thinking beyond PPE’ (i.e., focusing on their most immediate needs.” Using some of the protocols from the April 2021 *Kappan* and quoting Brown & Allen, as reported above, she found that although “...a crisis is a terrible context in which to start an RPP, it can reinvigorate an RPP in need of a minor tune-up.” RPPs will continue to support teachers, school district leaders now and beyond the time of pandemic and other crises.

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Note: Citations have been reproduced from the format provided in *The Phi Delta Kappan* and other sources.

CONGRATULATIONS, HAWA DEJAN MAGONA

Submitted by Dr. Katherine James

In 2019, the chapter Research Committee, as has become our custom, presented to the members an outstanding graduate student in the area of educational research: Hawa Dejan Magona. At that time, Hawa was a student at Trinity University pursuing her Master's Degree of Arts in Counseling. She rose to prominence in her class with her research

project entitled "Being Trauma-Informed and Trauma-Responsive: Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) – Programming for At-Rise Adolescents." She decided to research this topic after noticing, during her part-time job, that young females in detention were involved in violent acts toward one another, and she wondered why. After delving into many resources to investigate the problem, Hawa wrote an in-depth report on the subject. But she didn't stop there; her university project required that she address the problem and propose a solution.

Hawa created a Healthy Relationship Curriculum for Students, promoting the trauma-based awareness program to juvenile detention centers. The purpose of the curriculum is to enable young women in those situations to avoid the effect of intimate partner violence as they transition into their adulthood. She went on to explain how school counselors could provide training to staff and collaborate with staff and superintendent so that time can be allowed for health education that would entail intimate partner violence awareness.

Hawa presented her project, including a set of power point illustrations, at our chapter meeting on September 21, 2019. Following her presentation, she fielded numerous questions from the members, who expressed how well she had covered the topic and wanted to know more about it. We also welcomed Hawa's uncle to the meeting, as he came to hear her speak as well.

Later, during the pandemic of 2020, Hawa was received into membership of our chapter virtually. In addition, she completed the

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requirements for her Master of Arts Degree, which was conferred on May 27, 2021. Hawa has already accepted the position of School Counselor at Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda, MD.

***TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK – MAY 4,
2021***

Note: The following prayer was submitted by Dr. Katherine James with permission from Pastor Jeri Fields. It is a fitting prayer for educators.

God, we ask that You give educators the strength and courage to bear the extra burden of teaching and caring for students in this ongoing, very long season of COVID-19. May You inspire them with creativity as they navigate teaching in new ways, with new schedules, and with fluctuating parameters around their strong desire to teach and connect with their students. Fill them with inspiration, love, and peace as they find ways to deal with the many concerns they have as they perform to the best of their ability for the remainder of this school year, in planning for the summer, and as they look forward to a new school year in the Fall. We pray this for all educators as they reach out to teach the youngest to the oldest in a variety of settings that are indoors and outdoors, online and in-person, hybrid and ever-changing. In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN.

--Pastor Jeri Fields

***VIRTUAL LEARNING AND TEACHERS GO
HAND-IN-HAND***

By Helena P. Jones and Thomas L. Jones

Prior to the advent of Covid-19, Helena and I would go to our grandsons' elementary school after dismissal, take them to our home and supervise them while they completed their homework. However, after having kept them for the better part of the afternoon, we certainly looked forward to our daughter or son-in-law arriving from their schools as soon as possible to pick up their children.

This was a daily routine that kept us busy, and we enjoyed our role as "doting" grandparents, even if

it meant serving as after-school, "babysitters." However, this pandemic has given us a new responsibility, which requires our presence in their home practically every day from 7:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. or after. Since their public school has given parents the option of sending children to school or keeping them home for Distance Learning, our daughter asked us to supervise our grandsons' virtual learning in their home. We are happy to say that our two boys have demonstrated some responsibility of being self-directive, self-fulfilling and independent to a certain extent, while participating in "Online Instruction."

This new virtual teaching procedure that many public schools around the nation have adopted consists of using personal computers daily for student-instruction. Also, we are satisfied in knowing that our grandsons are able to use this learning tool called "ClassDojo" which we find to be very enriching. This teaching concept was a "brainstorm" by the Founders Sam Chaudhary and Liam Don who improvised a motivating and inspiring procedure for the teaching of core subjects and other disciplines through "Online Distance-Learning." The purpose of ClassDojo is to counter the adverse effects of students being quarantined for long periods of time and unable to participate in a normal classroom environment, which has adversely affected the learning process nationally.

"ClassDojo is an educational Technology Company, which connects primary school teachers, students and families through communication features, such as a feed for photos and videos from the school day, and messaging that can be translated into more than 35 languages. It also enables teachers to note feedback on student's skills and creates a portfolio for students, so that families can be aware of school activities outside of meeting with teachers." **(Wikipedia)**

This new teaching and learning experience through the use of laptop computers, was certainly very enlightening, especially since we were already accustomed to the concept of computer instruction in the classroom. Helena, a retired teacher of second grade with over 43 years of experience, had the pleasure of supervising and monitoring our first grader, who is amazingly quite knowledgeable in technological operations and procedures.

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Although he is, at times, independent and self-directed, there still is a need to make sure he gives his full attention. However, based upon his teacher's handling of the Distance Learning and teaching process, she is skilled in working with the students online, as well as those who are present in the classroom. She could see whether a student is focused (paying attention), present (camera on), participating in class (raising hands), or appears confused, non-responsive, in need of help or further explanation or questioning. This is an excellent example of "classroom management!" Here is an example of what was observed by Helena, when she was monitoring our first grader participating in virtual learning:

"As I observed my grandson's ability to use the manipulatives provided for a math presentation, I could readily see his enthusiasm in understanding the addition process. He began to add the tens and ones and easily arrive at his answers. (thumbs up!) The teaching sessions included ten frames, number chart, number line and counting blocks. Using the various manipulatives during the week greatly helped all the children to see and grasp the process of addition, as well as subtraction! The manipulatives during the week help the children to better understand which ones they liked the best! They didn't realize that all of the hands-on materials played a role in their comprehension.

The class had a very good grasp at understanding long and short vowel sounds from kindergarten. Reading and sounding out last year's word-practice helped blend and identify new vocabulary with a lot more proficiency this year. Students began reading in complete sentences without stumbling and began to identify new words with greater proficiency. All of the practices from pre-school and kindergarten made this year's reading a real success.

Children also had some exposure to Library, Physical Education and Art. Health, Science and Social Studies gave the children a wide range of experiences, which helped them use their reading ability in other areas of the curriculum. The exposure at library time allowed them to independently select their own books. The Art exposure gave all students the excitement of learning how to select, blend and make new colors to be included in their design or artwork. The Science and Social Studies booklets provided

the exposure to help them become actively involved in the knowledge of our health and getting older students vaccinated. The Health booklets keep students' minds on how to follow the healthy rules of washing their hands and wearing their masks. All these experiences kept children actively involved from 7:45 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. What an exciting and challenging day! Good Luck, children!"

On the other hand, our fourth grader appeared to exhibit more re-assuredness; he is uninhibited in asking questions; when necessary, he points out and expresses a need for further explanation from the teacher; and he is skilled in technical operations of the laptop. Nevertheless, he still is a child, who must be monitored accordingly, so that he does not deviate by exceeding the break time, lunch period or using his computer skills to venture to "time-wasting" games or entertainment. That is why it is important for either parents or those responsible for monitoring the students online to be present and aware (observant) of their participation.

The most unique feature that I find about ClassDoJo, is that it enables the teachers to immediately send messages to the parents by way of their cell phones or computers; keep them informed of the students' participation in class; notification of completion or incompleteness of class or home assignments, possible

missing assignments, upcoming meetings, special events and activities. In addition, the school principal has a special page which allows for direct communication to the parents or guardians. We also have a ClassDojo account that enables us to receive daily messages, notices from the vice principal, counselor, resource personnel, etc. And what is most surprising about ClassDojo, is that all resource subjects are taught, including Physical Education, in a modified manner, which have been devised to satisfy the curriculum and standards.

We have just provided you a capsule of information on how we spend our weeks in offering support to our 7 years old and 9 years old grandsons, while their parents are at their respective elementary schools teaching in a classroom environment and online. Although we are not certain what the future may hold for teachers and students in returning to a normal

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school environment, we can say that we are doing our best by offering our support in Distance Learning. Nevertheless, we can be certain that education will go on regardless of whatever unknown circumstances that may challenge society at any given time, such as what we have experienced for the past two years in this pandemic, Covid-19.

**AU CHAPTER #0151 PDK INTERNATIONAL
MEMBER, CO-AUTHORSHIP AND
RESEARCH PROJECT SELECTEE**

By Dr. Keith E. Robinson



Hello Fellow Kappans! Let me start by first giving attribution to the maker for this **blessing** and **opportunity**. I do not think that my selection was an accident, but rather, it happened by providence. For which, I say, “to God Be All the Glory!”

On March 8, 2021, I received a phone call informing me that out of a pool of about 20 to 40 minority academics who teach in the School of Business Management in the DMV-- I was selected to co-author a chapter. I will be co-authoring a textbook chapter with two tenured professors at the Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland at College Park on Contemporary Leadership Best Practices.

Although the details are not fully available, the book will consist of about 8 to 15 chapters or more. The book will focus specifically on the unique issues and challenges with contemporary leadership in the 21st century and vital next steps. The goal is to show how this core competency and transformative concept strategically impact us and clarify its role in practice. The project will start in late summer 2021. Usually, one is selected to co-author a chapter because of their past work experience, the body of work, knowledge base, and subject matter expertise. The research team anticipates the book reaching press in about 2024-2025, and that is ambitious.

Appropriately, I would like to thank you all for your kind, uplifting, and congratulatory well-wishes that I heartily took to heart. I also want to express my appreciation for all the **cheerleading** and **unwavering support** that you have given me in my capacity as your former Newsletter Editor and current VP of Programs. And I am now looking forward to serving as the chapters’ next President real soon.

I will be **stepping back** momentarily in my role and responsibilities, but I am **NOT stepping out**, as there is much work to be done in this chapter, and with every fiber of our collective being, we must get it done!

**SOE’S ELEMENTARY TEACHER PREP
PROGRAM GAINS ACCOLADES FOR
STRONG CLINICAL PRACTICE**

(Program is among only 33 that earn an “A,” according to National Council on Teacher Quality.)

By University Communications | October 20,
2020

American University’s School of Education graduate elementary teacher preparation program has been named (nctq.org) among the top in the country by the National Council on Teacher Quality, a nonpartisan, not-for-profit research and policy organization, for strong commitment to quality clinical practice experiences aimed at preparing aspiring teachers for the realities of the classroom.

AU’s program stands out as among only 33 traditional elementary programs that earn an A (of more than 1,100 evaluated) due to strong clinical experience requirements, including student teaching and residencies, and serves as a model of excellence for others. These top-performing programs are recognized for: Requiring candidates to spend 10 or more weeks in an experienced teacher’s classroom, including at least four days per week or the equivalent in the classroom each week; screening mentor teachers for mentorship skill and/or instructional effectiveness as measured by student learning, among other skills; and requiring program supervisors to give student teachers written feedback based on observations at least four times during the clinical practice experience.

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The evidence for the importance of high-quality clinical experience is undeniable. A National Research Council report said that clinical practice experience is one of three “aspects of preparation that have the highest potential for effects on outcomes for students,” and recent research has found that having a high-quality clinical practice experience can mean a first-year teacher starts out as effective as a typical teacher in her third year.

“Teachers need to learn from other teachers. Mentorship and experiential education are key components of a teacher’s education at American University’s School of Education, and they are critical for teachers’ success in teaching K-5 students,” said SOE Dean Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy. “An ‘A’ grade from the National Council on Teacher Quality reflects the School of Education’s commitment to clinical practice.”

Of the three indicators NCTQ examines, almost all traditional elementary programs dedicate sufficient time for clinical practice to occur, with 99 percent of programs (not including alternative programs that put teachers directly into their own classrooms) requiring practice of at least 10 weeks, and over two thirds of programs (70 percent) making sure that their elementary teacher candidates are observed frequently. However, despite significant research on the outsized impact of the mentor teacher, only 3 percent require the classroom mentor teacher to be both effective (in terms of student learning) and have the skills to mentor another adult. A major obstacle to teacher preparation programs adopting more rigorous screening of mentor teachers appears to be that they traditionally defer to school districts in the selection of mentors. (Teacher residency programs proved to be a notable exception to this practice, with 88 percent of these programs playing a more active role in the selection of classroom mentors for aspiring teachers.)

“These top programs are to be commended,” observed Kate Walsh, president of NCTQ. “Too many teacher prep programs struggle to make clinical practice a meaningful learning experience for aspiring teachers – especially when it comes to selecting effective mentor teachers, often due to lack of quality control by their partner school districts. The effort that these top programs have made to ensure alignment with their local districts so they can offer strong clinical experiences will

have lasting positive impacts on their teacher candidates, and more importantly, their candidates’ future students.”

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has, at least for this year, reshaped much of what happens in schools, including clinical practice experiences for aspiring teachers. Many states and teacher preparation programs have moved their clinical practice experiences online or abbreviated them. However, the basic principles of quality clinical practice still stand in spite of COVID and are still critical to the success of aspiring teachers in their future careers.

Now in its fourth edition, the Teacher Prep Review assigns a team of experts to evaluate teacher preparation programs on three elements of clinical practice: 1) the length of the experience, 2) the frequency of observation and feedback from a program supervisor, and 3) that the program requires that mentor teachers are effective and have the skills needed to mentor another adult.

NEW POLL SHOWS AMERICA’S TEACHERS WANT TO RETURN TO CLASSROOMS AMID GROWING CONFIDENCE IN SAFETY GUARDRAILS

More than 8 out of 10 AFT (American Federation of Teachers) educators support a return to in-person learning with safety guardrails in place, and, by a similar margin, approve of the Biden administration’s plan to make reopening schools safely a reality, according to a new national poll released Tuesday (February 16, 2021).

The wide-ranging survey finds just 16 percent of educators think their school system has gone too far with reopening, and 85 percent would be comfortable working in classrooms if the AFT’s safety recommendations were followed and funded. The vast majority of respondents, 79 percent, say remote learning is not working as well as in-person.

The AFT published its first set of recommendations for how to reopen schools safely [in April 2020](#), and it has updated its guidance as new evidence has come to light, including Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations and vaccine availability.

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The poll shows AFT members overwhelmingly trust their union and the CDC to provide sound advice about how and when schools should reopen. Eighty-eight percent support the AFT’s plan for proper safety protocols, including testing, masks, physical distancing, cleaning and sanitizing procedures, and ventilation upgrades in every school.

“Teachers want a path to safely return to their classrooms because they understand the importance of in-school learning for their kids,” said **AFT President Randi Weingarten**. “This isn’t an ‘either/or,’ it’s a ‘both/and.’ If we can implement commonsense safety protocols, we can not only open, we can do it safely and with the overwhelming support of teachers and support personnel.”

The poll comes hot on the heels of an acrid national debate over reopening schools: The GOP has made a cynical political calculation, after doing nothing for months to help educators, fight COVID or deal with reopening, and is now attempting to pit parents against teachers by falsely claiming teachers are not willing to return to classrooms. The survey, conducted by Hart Research Associates on behalf of the AFT, puts a lie to those claims.

Overall, 40 percent of educators say their school should be operating in a hybrid mode, 24 percent say it should be fully in person and 34 percent support remote only. But the poll suggests the significant differences in attitudes depending on the mode the respondents were already using. Among those teaching fully in-person, 62 percent say they should remain so; 55 percent using a hybrid model wish to stay teaching that way; and 75 percent teaching remotely would prefer to continue in that mode. Crucially, even those not comfortable with in-person school back the AFT’s reopening plan by 73 percent to 21 percent.

In another promising finding, 23 percent of AFT members say they have already been vaccinated, and an additional 47 percent say they will get vaccinated as soon as a shot is available or within a few weeks.

The AFT has campaigned for months to ensure educators returning to in-person school have priority for the vaccine alongside other essential workers, and it has bargained agreements with

cities and school districts to ensure its distribution.

“This poll raises the question of whether, if the last administration had provided educators with a coherent national plan and the resources to fund it 10 months ago—a plan along the lines of the Biden administration’s—and had we implemented the guardrails recommended by the AFT in the early days of the pandemic, we would even be having this noxious debate,” Weingarten added.

“While other countries revere their teachers as professionals and pay them accordingly, elite U.S. commentators and GOP rhetoricians appear to revel in a fresh round of teacher bashing whenever the chance arises—in this case to blame them for Donald Trump’s disastrous response to a devastating pandemic.

“It’s not only wrong on the facts, it’s a reckless and reprehensible way to treat those tasked with making sure the next generation has the opportunity to thrive. Teachers want what children need—a safe and rapid return to in-person learning and the resources to make it real.”

– Source: <https://www.aft.org/press-release/new-poll-shows-americas-teachers-want-return-classrooms-amid-growing>

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